



Debris Removal News

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DEBRIS REMOVAL PROGRAM ADOPTED IN SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY

The last thing people who lost homes in last month's devastating wildfires need is to worry about coming up with the money to haul away the remnants of their beloved homes.

That's why the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors today adopted the Debris Management Program for the Grass Valley and Slide fires, which includes covering the costs of debris removal for everyone in the county who suffered damage or destruction during the disaster.

In many cases, insurance will cover some or all of the costs. The plan approved today by the Board of Supervisors will pick up the costs not covered by insurance, and also cover the costs for those who are uninsured.

"Having this debris removed in a quick and orderly manner benefits everyone in the county," said San Bernardino County Supervisor Dennis Hansberger, whose Third District includes all of homes damaged or destroyed by the fires. "Covering the costs for the fire victims is also simply the right thing to do."

The Board's action today is the latest development in the county clean-up effort that began the moment the fires were contained. County crews have been busy identifying and removing hazardous waste, launching the effort to identify and remove asbestos, and identifying burned vehicles.

The program provides a customer driven all-in-one solution that will safely clear fire disaster debris at no direct cost to the property owner. The program includes a wide range of services including HazMat inspection & removal, asbestos inspection & removal (if needed), debris removal including foundations, vehicle removal, hazard tree removal and erosion control measures. Work has already begun and the entire effort is expected to be finished by March 2008.

Affected property owners are encouraged to sign up, some 500 sign up packets were mailed out last Friday. Owners can also pickup a packet at the Debris Removal Center, 2677 Whispering Pines Drive in Running Springs or on-line at www.sbcounty.gov/wsd. For more information please call 909-867-7579.

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The San Bernardino Debris Removal Program was developed in coordination with the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) and the California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB) based on the model used for the debris removal efforts following the Angora Fire in South Lake Tahoe earlier this year.

Under the Angora model, debris was removed and disposed of in one step rather than being picked up, placed near a public right-of-way, picked up again and taken to a disposal site. As a result, property owners, insurance companies, local agencies and the state all saved money.

"There were many lessons learned during the implementation of the Angora model that are being applied here in San Bernardino County", said Margo Reid Brown, CIWMB Chair. "We are proud that we can work together with Federal, State and local officials to apply best practices and ensure we are doing all we can for the victims of these devastating fire."

Federal reimbursements provided by FEMA and an aggressive insurance recovery program that the County of San Bernardino will operate as part of its debris removal program are also expected to help reduce some of the state's costs.

Additionally, OES and CIWMB are working with the counties of San Diego and Orange and the Cities of Escondido and San Diego to implement similar programs to create a more effective and timely clean-up effort.

The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) coordinates overall state-agency response to major disasters in support of local government. OES is also responsible for maintaining the State Emergency Plan and coordinating the California's preparedness, mitigation and recovery efforts.

The California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB) is the State's leading authority on recycling and waste reduction promoting a zero waste California in partnership with local government, industry, and the public. This means reducing waste whenever possible, promoting the management of all materials to their highest and best use, and protecting public health and safety and the environment.

FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, economic status or retaliation. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, you should call FEMA toll-free at 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or contact your State Office of Equal rights. If suspicious of any abuse of FEMA programs, please contact the fraud hotline at 1-800-323-8603.

Temporary housing assistance from FEMA does not require that an applicant file for an SBA loan. However, an applicant must complete an SBA loan application to be eligible for additional assistance under the part of the Other Needs Assistance (ONA) program that covers personal property, vehicle repair or replacement, and moving and storage expenses. There are other ONA grants such as public transportation expenses, medical and dental expenses, and funeral and burial expenses that do not require individuals to apply for an SBA loan to be eligible. FEMA will process applications for housing assistance regardless of whether the applicant has applied for an SBA loan, and eligibility determinations for applicants requesting FEMA's temporary housing assistance will not be held up because the applicant has or has not filled out an SBA application.

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